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Testimony on “H.R. 1545 – Waco Mammoth National Monument Establishment Act”
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
June 14, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, my name is Larry D. Groth and I am City Manager for the City of Waco. I am here today to urge your favorable consideration for H.R. 1545.

We are extremely fortunate to have a paleontological site in Waco that has national significance. In 1978, two of our local citizens discovered some large bones in a ravine in north Waco near the confluence of the Brazos and Bosque Rivers. This discovery was the first of more than 24 Columbian Mammoths ranging from 3 to 55 years old, which appear to have died approximately 68,000 years ago. There are also indications of more mammoth remains near the existing excavations. This makes the Waco site the largest concentration in North America of extinct mammoths. It provides a unique opportunity for all of us to understand and interpret the behavior and ecology of an extinct species.

This discovery has already received international attention with archeologists, geologists, and paleontologists from the U. S., Sweden, and Great Britain visiting the site during the past several years. Integrity of the scientific data has been protected since the site has been under investigation by a single agency, Baylor University, since 1978. The City of Waco and Baylor University have partnered to protect the remains and secure sufficient property surrounding the site for future development of the resource. Over 105 acres surrounding the dig site has been secured with access to the Bosque River to enhance recreational opportunities.

In December 2002, a special resource study by the National Park Service was authorized for the Waco site. The study found that the Waco Mammoth Site met the requirements of being nationally significant, being a suitable addition to the system and a feasible addition to the system. The need for direct management by the National Park Service was not absolute, but a partnership was highly recommended to achieve the development and protection goals of the site to its fullest extent.

In 2006, the City of Waco and Baylor University chartered the Waco Mammoth Foundation to initiate a major fund raising campaign to construct the first phase of site development which provided for a permanent structure to protect the dig site, a small visitor and ticketing center, and access to the site.

I am pleased to report that we have raised over \$4 million, mostly local donations, and have completed the phase I construction. More than 40,000 visitors have enjoyed the site since opening.

Favorable consideration for H.R. 1545 would greatly enhance our efforts to protect and interpret this fantastic national treasure. Bringing in the National Park Service as a partner with the City of Waco and Baylor University would greatly strengthen an already strong relationship. It would provide an opportunity to maximize each of our strengths in the management and development of this resource.

Most importantly, we are not asking for federal dollars for capital or operations & maintenance since we are providing that locally. We are only asking for the national recognition this site deserves. We need the National Parks Service to be given the authority to work with us and make this happen. Your favorable consideration of H.B. 1545 will greatly leverage our local efforts.

Also, we greatly appreciate Congressman Flores' efforts on our behalf and for this unique opportunity for our nation.